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ABSTRACT

Described are activities and plans of the All-Russia Society for the Blind. Noted is the changing composition of society membership in the direction of more members past 60 years of age and fewer children blinded at birth or early childhood. It is reported that all the blind who wish work are employed, and that the society provides professional training and rational employment. Also reported are production figures of the society during the last 5-year plan period (1966-70) and production awards received by society members. Described are other activities of the society including clubs, recreational activities, lectures, youth work, sports, publications, and evening classes. Among social and welfare services said to be provided are housing, summer camp facilities, medical services, construction of eye hospitals, production of blind education equipment, and training of dog guides. The training of leaders for the society is explained to involve selection of qualified administrators (89% of directors are blind) and periodic refresher courses. Noted is the stable financial position of the society with productive work ensuring solvency and an increased budget of 33% from 1967 to 1970. It is stressed that the society's success is due to the help given by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government. (DB)

B. Zimin

RAISING THE WELFARE OF THE BLIND IN THE USSR

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THE ALL-RUSSIA SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND

RAISING THE WELFARE OF THE BLIND IN THE USSR

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MATERIALS FOR THE SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE WORLD UNION
FOR THE WELFARE OF THE BLIND

MOSCOW - 1972

In accordance with the Rules of the All-Russia Society For the Blind (V.O.S.) an All-Russia Congress of the society is convened once every four years which discusses the Report of the Central Board about its activities. Below we publish materials from the Report dealing with the work of the Society in the period between 1967-1971 and delivered at the 12th V.O.S. Congress held in Leningrad in July 27-28, 1971.

From this material the reader will learn about the extensive and many-sided work conducted by the Society and a considerable improvement of economic and cultural conditions of life of the blind in the Soviet Union and about the main targets which the Society plans to pursue in this direction in the near future.

The material and financial strengthening of the Society and a considerable improvement of the welfare of the blind were possible in our country due to the consistent attention to the needs of the blind on the part of the Communist Party and the Soviet government.

The present article offers an extensive information about the activities of this organisation and is intended to satisfy the interest displayed in the work of this Society.

I. COMPOSITION OF THE SOCIETY

In recent years the composition of the Society has noticeably stabilised. With every year the number of the Society's members past their 60s is increasing. The loss of vision in early childhood and at birth became a very rare phenomenon.

Ageing of the composition of the Society is the general marked tendency today. Statistics of the dynamics of blindness show that socio-economic prerequisites of blindness have been completely liquidated in the Soviet Union thanks to constant improvement of people's well-being and large-scale public-health and social insurance measures.

Today there are 179,300 registered blind persons in the Russian Federation; they include completely blind and persons with a visual acuity up to 0.1 which in our country is regarded practically as blindness. Thirty eight per cent of the blind resides in rural areas. 0.1 per cent are children under seven, 6.1 per cent — young people under 18 and nearly 40 per cent — over 60 (four years ago this category made up 33 per cent).

Today in 26 out of 70 republican (autonomous), territorial and regional organisations included in the All-Russia Society more than 50 per cent of its members are people over 60.

The growing number of aged people demand closer individual approach to them, selection of the correct forms of drawing them into public activity, maximum attention to questions of their cultural and welfare service.

Branches of the Society conduct a very important work of uniting all the blind. Those who do not work are joined into branches at the places of their residence and all those who work or study into branches of an enterprise of an educational estoblishment. These branches record all the

blind, learn their interests, render help in their professional training, find work for them, help with their education and conduct cultural and mass work. Af the 1,159 branches in the Russian Federation, 266 are production.

In recent years more and more members of the Society are drawn into public work on voluntary basis.

Over 200 scientists, teachers, engineers and workers of other specialities work at the Presidium of the Central Board on voluntary basis in its various sections and councils. All in all there are over 25,000 enthusiasts working in the Society as members of the elected leading organs, group organisers, members of various commissions. Their work is fruitful in the solution of many practical questions.

The Society continues to develop and consolidate democratic principles, strict observance of accountability of the elected leading bodies before its electors in the terms written down in the Rules. All sides of the activity of the Society are freely and thoroughly discussed at the general meetings of the Society members. They promote the activity and interest in the work in all members of the Society.

II. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND RATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

It is several years now that the seemingly unattainable dream about the employment of all the blind who wished to work has been realized in the Soviet Union. This means that conditions have been created when the wish of every person to work immediately finds practical solution. He receives professional training and the work that interests him at an enterprise of the Society, at state plants and factories or at the collective or state farms. It can be said with all confidence that this can be realized only in a socialist state.

Since all the blind who wished to obtain work, practically have it, the main task of the Society today is to make their employment rational. This means organisation of such production and health conditions at the enterprises that will facilitate the retention of residual vision, hearing and sense of touch.

The Society sees to it that all blind people get the jobs they can do best. They work in this on scientific basis in co-operation with engineers and technicians, doctors, psychologists and physiologists.

Schools of social and labour rehabilitation are the main link in the initial vocational training of blind people. In the last four pears alone of the 1,500 blind people who have received vocational training at the Cheboksary and Biysk schools the greater part went to work at the vocatnonal and production enterprises of the Society where teaching blind mass professions remain the basic kind of professional training. Over 5,500 have received various professions there and 11,000 went through refresher courses. It should be noted that the work of the blind is employed in production in over three hundred professions.

The construction of large production and administrative buildings at the Society's enterprises helped largely to resolve questions of high culture and aesthetics of production. Technological processes are introduced on the basis of scientific organisation of labour. Thus the tasks of the rational employment of the blind at industrial enterprises is being tackled quite successfully.

In recent years the Central Board began to draw research organisations into the elaboration of various problems of rational employment. Thus the Leningrad laboratory conductiong research in functional possibilities of the organ of vision is drawing up recommendations of the

permissible conditions of work for cases of various eye diseases, and also optimal conditions of lighting of the working places for people with residual vision; the Vilnius Laboratory of the All-Union Research Institute of Thermal Insulation develops recommendations for decreasing noise in stamping shops; the Sverdlovsk Institute of the National Economy tackles questions of scientific ogranisation of labour at the Society's enterprises. In 1971 it was intended to organise a special laboratory at the Moscow Central Research Institute of the Examination of the Capacity For Work which would develop various problems of rational employment of blind people from medical, psychological and physiological viwpoints.

All heads of the laboratories, specialists and technicians will concentrate their attention on searching optimal solution of questions of rational employment. Permanent contacts will be established with the state medical and work expert commissions with a view of obtaining from them work recommendations in each concrete case. All the factors of labour conditions will be brought in line with the established standards of comfort. Of special importance here is the problem of lighting the working places for persons with residual vision. The Society's Designing Bureau got down to work on designing a special lamp.

We have already mentioned that the expansion of production made it possible to employ all the blind who wished to work. As of January 1, 1971 there were 77,400 blind persons employed in the Russian Federation: 55,400 worked at the enterprises and organisations of the Society, 13,300 — at state enterprises, 8,100 — at collective and state farms, 600 studied at higher and specialised schools.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTION

Production work is the most important sphere of the activity of the All-Russia Society for the Blind.

The development of the Society's training and production enterprises ensures the implementation of the task of rational employment of all the blind and creates the necessary economic basis for financing of its entire work. This task becomes all the more important since they make up a portion, although rather small, of the general national economic plan of the country. This instills the feeling of responsibility in each worker, engineer, technician and employee of an enterprise, helps in raising his activity and the desire to fulfil his production and economic tasks ahead of time.

In the years of the last five-year plan period (1966—1970) the Society's enterprises put out products to the tune of 1,825 million rubles, of which products for the sum of 144 million rubles were put out over and above the plan. As compared with previous Five-year plan period the volume of production went up 42.6 per cent, the productivity of labour increased by 23.6 per cent and the average wages — by 20.3 per cent.

The expansion of production capacities was the result of the effort of the workers and employees of the Society's enterprises who worked with will in order to greet befitingly the centenary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin, the leader and founder of the Soviet state, which was marked throughout the country.

In 1971 the output of these enterprises amounted to 440 million rubles.

In the period under discussion the Society aimed along with technical improvement of its enterprises to enlarge

and specialise them. The undertaken measures helped to boost economic efficiency of production, improve its control and to create better possibilities for the rational employment and better cultural and living conditions for the blind.

At present the Society has 111 enterprises each employing up to 300 workers, 84 enterprises with over 300 workers and 52 enterprises which employ over 500 workers. At some of the enterprises there work 1,000 and even more workers. It should be noted that the number of the blind at each enterprise varies depending on technology of production and complexity of the product, but, nevertheless, comprises not less than 50 per cent of the general number of workers.

The Society has 128 fully-specialised enterprises of which 46 specialise in manufacturing electrical engineering articles, 23 — in light industry goods, 15 — in cardboard articles, 13 — in making spare parts for motor cars, tractors and farm machines, 31 — are engaged in metal-working; and 117 enterprises combine two of the above mentioned lines of production.

Of late, to specialise the production, 75 enterprises started making 85 new kinds of articles for electrical engineering, motorcar and tractor and metal-working branches of industry, as well as bristle and brush articles for industrial use.

Of great import is the co-operation of the enterprises with large works of the state industry for which they supply various parts and units for their assembly lines. The state industry placed orders with 158 of our enterprises. The specific volume of their production make up 41 per cent of the general volume of production.

When selecting new kinds of articles, further specialisation was planned with a view of mastering new products

of the similar kind, in line with the profile of these enterprises.

As compared with 1966 the output of lighting fixtures, highvoltage apparatus and transformars doubled, that of low-voltage apparatus and motor-car and tractor electrical equipment went up 40 per cent, motor-car wiring — 80 per cent, parts and units for motor cars and farm machines — 50 per cent, tractor parts and units — 160 per cent, bristle and brush articles — 240 per cent.

Mechanisation and improvement of technological processes are an important factor raising the efficiency of production.

The amount of plant also showed a marked increase — metal-cutting — by 45.8 per cent, cardboard — 63.6 per cent, forging and pressing — 9 per cent, wood-working — 20 per cent, power — 21.3 per cent.

Besides, at present, over 5,000 non-standard units are operating at the Society's enterprises made by its own technicians and 255 conveyor lines installed.

Nearly four thousand workers, engineers and technicians take an active part in rationalising work that makes up an immense economic reserve of production. In 1969 and 1970 alone 7,142 rationalising suggestions were made which netted over 2 million rubles annually.

The Society's enterprises receive sizable help from the Special Designing Bureau of the Society. In the last four years the Bureau developed 232 new technological projects and processes; 612 closed-in stamps and various devices for the work of the blind, 47 special machines and semi-automats, 188 conveyor lines and hoisting devices, 480 technical conditions and norms of consumption of raw maternals for the manufactured articles. The Bureau regularly publishes technical literature on the exchange of experience.

Along with the increase in production expanded material and technical supply which ensures annual fulfilment of the target production plans. The centralised funds on raw materials, various production materials and transport in this period went up by more than 40 per cent.

The growing technical equipment of the enterprises and the expansion of the range of employment of the blind demanded special attention to safety technique and labour protection. In 1970 1,200,000 rubles allocated for this purpose, the figure that considerably exceeded the expenditures in the previous years, went into the improvement of the conditions and making safe the work of the blind.

In recent years the Society constantly worked on the improvement of planning of production.

Reorganisation of production, its enlargement and specialisation, improvement of the living conditions of the workers of our enterprises and members of the Society could be successfully implemented only on the basis of the wide-scale capital construction. The Society builds new houses on its own funds. The work is carried out by the state building organisations in accordance with the plan established by the Government.

As compared with the last period under review, the volume of capital investments in 1967-1970 went up by 25 per cent and amounted to 102,300,000 rubles, of which 78,300,000 were spent on capital construction and assembly work. Capital investements into housing construction comprised 54 per cent, into the construction of production buildings — 37 per cent, construction of clubs — 4 per cent, sanatoriums and holiday homes — 3 per cent, children's preschool establishments — 2 per cent.

These years saw the commissioning of 539,000 sq. m. of production and auxiliary buildings, 270,500 sq. m. of living

space, preschool establishments for 1,250 children and clubs seating 800 people.

The construction of complexes which is under way and which include production, administration and economic, living, cultural and welfare buildings has fully justified itself since they provide all the necessary amenities for the blind and their families.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government highly evaluated the achievements of the Society workers. In honour of the 50 years of the Soviet state celebrated in 1967 and for the successful implementation of the five-year production plan,active work in the field of social provision of the blind 312 front-rank workers, engineers, technicians and employees of the enterprises and organisations of the Society were awarded in 1971 the orders and medals of the Soviet Union.

9,612 best workers of the enterprises and organisations of the Society received the medal "For Valiant Labour in Honour of the V. I. Lenin's Birth Centenary".

The workers, engineers and technicians of the Society, together with all Soviet people, filled with patriotic striving to implement grandeois decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU in the shortest time possible, have launched the socialist emulation and work for the fulfilment of the targets of the ninth five-year plan ahead of time.

IV. MASS WORK

The developing production and economic activity of the Society along with capital construction have created the necessary material, technical and financial basis for furthering and expanding mass educational and cultural work.

The Society has 146 clubs and 794 recreation rooms equipped with the necessary furniture, teaching aids and apparatus.

Lectures on scientific, technical, economic and political subjects, literary readings, film shows and recreation evenings are being held regularly there.

Much attention is being paid to the work with youth for whom excursions, tourist hikes, meetings with heroes of labour are organised. Children are not forgotten either. Lectures in pedagogics and upbringing of children are read for blind parents.

Over two thousand dramatic, dance, music, song, literature and other circles organised at the clubs and recreation rooms attended by 24,000. More than 22,000 blind sportsmen frequent 1,550 sports sections (athletics, gymnastics, wrestling, swimming, skiing, chess and draughts).

Together with the USSR Ministry of Culture and the Central Committee of Trade Unions the Society held in 1970 the All-Union Amature Art Festival in which participated 3,000 blind artists.

The programmes of the amature art collectives were distinct for their high performance skill and variety of genres.

496 collectives, performers and directors of the sections were awarded diplomas of the 1st and 2nd category by the RSFSR Ministry of Culture for their creative achievements.

Physical culture and sport have become part and parsel of the life of the blind. Seven blind sportsmen received the title of Master of Sport in chess and draughts, Candidate of Master of Sport in chess and draughts — three sportsmen, three in Greco-Roman wrestling, one in gymnastics; 700 blind sportsmen received the first sports rating.

Our sportsmen successfully compete in the All-Union

chess and draughts competitions of the societies of the blind and invariably capture individual and team first places.

In 1968 our track and field team for the fifth time running won the first place in the international youth competitions of the socialist countries in athletics held in Moscow. Our chess players brought gold medals from the 3rd International Chess Olympiad for the Blind held in Britain in 1968 in which teams from 20 countries took part. That same year they came up victorious playing against the team from Yugoslavia in the chess tournament in Moscow and in 1969 — in Yugoslavia.

The book plays a big role in the ideological and aesthetic education. In the Soviet Union all libraries for the blind, like all libraries in the country belong to the state. At present Russian Federation boasts 71 state regional libraries and 992 mobile libraries for the blind with the book stock of 2,100,000 including 1,400,000 volumes in braille editions which cater to 82,000 readers.

Enterprises and local organisations of the Society take an active part in the work of the libraries helping to popularise books among the blind, in organisation of bibliographic information, organising readers' conferences and literature evenings.

The All-Russia Society for the Blind constantly allocates funds for building and equipping libraries for stocking its book storages.

All literature for the blind in braille editions is published by the State Prosveshcheniye Publishing House which drawsa up its plans in concord with the All-Russia Society for the Blind. In the 1967—1970 period, the Publishing House put out 1,150 editions of Russian, classical, Soviet

and foreign fiction and also books and textbooks in various fields of knowledge.

Monthly magazines "Nasha Zhizn" ("Our Life"), "Appeal", "Literary Readings", "Soviet Schoolchildren" published by the All-Russia Society for the Blind and also such collections as "Assistance to Amateur Art Groups", "The World of Music", "Physical Culture and Sports", "Chess and Draughts", "Assistance to the Blind Masseurs" provide and extensive information about the life of the country, the experience of the work of the Society and broaden the horizons of professional knowledge.

In recent years, the so-called talking book has won great popularity among the members of the Society. Each library has organised sections of tape recordings which systematically receive books recorded on tape.

In the period under review the Studio of Sound Recording of the Society recorded 270 editions of books in 26,600 copies of tape. In 1971 the Studio was equipped with modern sound-recording apparatus capable of recording books with the speed of 2.38 cm/sec, the recording speed which allows to increase the volume of recorded literature by four times, the expenditure of the tape being the same. In 1971 the Studio will record 120 editions in 21,600 copies and in 1972 it will be 178 editions in 32,000 copies.

The general educational schools for the blind are run by the RSFSR Ministry of Education.

The organisations of the All-Russia Society for the Blind displaying constant care about the general education of the blind people have scored considerable successes in in this field in recent years.

5,285 blind students study at 12 evening and correspondence schools for the working youths. 4,100 graduated from

these schools after receiving nine-year and completed education in the period between 1966—69.

The Society renders assistance to the organs of public education in improving preschool upbringing of the blind children, in educating and upbringing schoolchildren completely blind or those with poor sight.

Over 11,000 pupils study in 50 boarding schools for the blind and in 23 schools for children with poor sight. At present general compulsory nine-year education of the blind children has been introduced on the whole throughout the Russian Federation. The Society's organisations render great material help in repairing shops. Nearly one million rubles are allocated annually to schools for buying equipment for study rooms, economic, cultural and sports articles, for the functioning of music, song, dramatic and physical culture and sport circles. Senior pupils undergo production practicals at the training-production enterprises of the Society.

Special schools give pupils solid general and polytechnic training. Most of their graduates work with will at the Society's enterprises and take an active part in public life.

Many of the graduates enter specialised and higher schools. They are helped in selecting and acquiring literature and are provided with paid secretaries-readers. After graduating from their schools they are granted jobs in their specialities.

Public commissions set up under the Central Board of the Society which include blind scientists, teachers and other specialists have worked out and are preparing for publication a unified system of recording mathematical, chemical and physical designations and the first stage of the Braille system of shorthand in Russian. These novelties

will be of great help in process of education of the blind in secondary and higher schools.

V. SOCIAL AND WELFARE SERVICE

The All-Russia Society for the Blind pays much attention to social and welfare service regarding this work as one of the most important.

During the period under review over 34,000 workers and employees of the Society and their families received new flats. Besides extraordinary grants to the tune of 2,600,000 rubles were allocated for the construction and repairing individual homes of the members of the Society in rural areas.

Every year the Society pays for the rest and treatment of 17,000 workers and employees; nearly 12,000 children go to summer Pioneer camps.

In 1972 a sanatorium for 250 persons will be opened in Gelenjik on the Black Sea coast.

Special rooms set up at the enterprises provide medical service for the workers and employees and together with medical establishments conduct regular prevention and treatment measures for blind persons.

In 1972—1975 the Society will allocate funds for the contruction of 43 eye-hospitals and thus further improve medical treatment of eye diseases.

The demand for the blind education equipment is growing with every year. Over 40 articles of this kind are made at the training-production foctories and state plants and factories. The articles to be put out in 1972 will include household weights, room thermometres with relief designations, folding walking sticks, study aids in mathematics, relief globes for senior blind pupils, sets of joiner's tools and so on. A specialised shop for making educational

equipment for the blind has been set up at one of the Society's factories in Moscow. A commission on blind educational equipment consisting of representatives of the societies for the blind of the union republics will co-ordinate the efforts of the societies in developing and manufacturing equipment for the blind.

Extensive work has been done by the laboratory of the electronic vision of the Institute of Medical Instrument Making of the USSR Ministry of Medical Industry. It has developed ultra-sound echo-sounder, portable and stationary devices for reading printed texts, a television adapter which allows persons with poor sight to watch TV programmes and so on.

Considering that the "talking book" wins ever greater popularity tape recorders are issued to war veterans free of charge and a 50 per cent discount is granted to invalids with poor sight. Certain other equipment for the blind such as tapewriters, apparatus for writing, walking sticks and so on are also sold at discount.

The Central republican school training dog-walkers for the blind and a speicalised shop cater to the blind invalids. During the period under review the school gave over to them 313 dog-walkers while the shop in the same period posted 230,000 parcels to blind buyers to all corners of the country.

VI. TRAINING LEADING CADRES

The correct development of all aspects of the activities of the Society and successful implementation of the tasks facing it is prove that the All-Russian Society for the Blind has at its disposal well-educated and highly-qualified administrative and engineering cadres well-versed in their work.

Constant attention is paid to the selection, arrangement and training of cadres. The staff of administrators, engineers and technicians has improved quite considerably. 108 young specialists from the graduates of the higher schools of the country came to work at the factories.

Refresher groups for factory directors, chief engineers, deputy directors for educational work, heads of planning departments and economists, chief and senior accountants, heads of shops and technologists, as well as, foremen, were organised at the Refresher Institute for raising the qualification of leading personel run by the Society. The workers occupying these posts are summoned to the institute once in three years for raising their quilification and for exchange of experience. In the last four years 3,200 responsible workers of the Society's enterprises went through the refresher courses at this Institute. Studies are conducted on the means of the Society with the wages being retained at their places of work.

89 per cent of the directors of enterprises and 95 per cent of their deputies for educational work are blind. In a number of cases the blind persons work as heads of shops. However, of late there is a lack of cadres from among the blind for promotion to leading posts. The Society regards it as its immediate task to organise at the Institute special two-or-three-year courses for training leaders and organisers of production from among the blind with higher education.

In selecting and training leading cadres account should be taken of the fact that the present-day production and technical level of the Society's enterprises urgently demands more qualified economic, technical and organisational leadreship of the collectives of factories, shops and sections.

VII. FINANCES

Economic activity ensured the Society stable financial position. The work of all its factories and shops is profitable and they are solvent.

The Society's budget between 1967 and 1970 increased by 33 per cent. Balance-sheet profit amounted to 358,200,000 rubles while expenditures for the same period came up to 247,900,000 rubles. This sum was spent as follows: 55 per cent on capital investments, building schools for the blind children, improvement of roads and so on, 5.9 per cent on replenishment of working capital of the factories and shops, 6.8 per cent on cultural and educational work and training of cadres, 5.4 per cent on medical and material help to the Society's members and on health measures for the children.

From the cited figures it is evident that the bulk of the funds is chanelled into capital investments and replenishment of the working capital of the factories and shops. The expenditures on medical and maternal help to members of the Society have gone up considerably.

We can say with all confidence that the results of economic activity of the factories and shops allow to direct sufficient means on the implementation of practical tasks of the Society aimed at expanding and improving of production, launching new capital construction, resolving problems of rational employment, further perfectioning of the cultural and educational service of the blind and also improving the condition of boarding schools for the blind children, conducting measures preventing blindness and those of socio-medical rehabilitation of the blind.

The All-Russia Society for the Blind scored sizable successes in its work only due to the constant help rendered by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government.

Qualitative rational employment of the blind became the foundation of the work of the Society and helped to stimulate progress and improve its activity.

However, we are aware that there are shortcomings in the work of the Society and many problems that yet to be solved.

The implementation of the tasks of the Society ensuing from the Decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU and the Five-Year Plan adopted by it will demand considerable effort on the part of each worker, high public and labour activity.

Workers, engineers, technicians, employees and all members of the all-Russia Society for the Blind participating in the country-wide socialist emulation will score new successes and thus make their contribution to the realisation of the historical decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU.

Б. ЗИМИН

ДАЛЬНЕЙШЕЕ ПОВЫШЕНИЕ БЛАГОСОСТОЯНИЯ СЛЕПЫХ В СССР

на английском языке

Цена 22 коп.